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The European crisis: economic, political and scientific dimensions – how Western civilization radically reinvents itself

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Certain key concepts help to build the block that may explain the present economic recession from a less conventional perspective. The first concept is the relationship between dominant and non-dominant thinking. The argument is that Western civilization has evolved out of the creative tension built out of the inner conflict between a conventional mentality, on one hand, and the contesting perspectives that gradually deny the validity of mainstream thought, on the other. The conventional approach within each epoch is the one that has served well in the past and that resists adaptation and change. As reality becomes more and more distanced from this conventional view, the less conventional perspectives gain strength and gradually replace the main view. In turn, these new views from the periphery become themselves mainstream and the cycle continues.

The second concept is that institutions are a central unity for the perpetuation of this cycle. It is at institutional level that both the creative and the destroying forces emerge, both within and between institutions. That is, within each single institution, the tensions between mainstream and non-mainstream thinking are replicated, and there is a succession of stability, and dominance of a certain approach, and then the contestation and change to new approaches. But this process may occur also in the relationships between institutions, where some may represent more stable and conventional perspectives, which are then challenged by peripherical institutions that represent alternative views, forcing the former ones to either change or perish.

The third concept is that reality is constantly manifesting itself. This manifestation process is an endless flow, which itself constitutes a form of rationality, of intelligibility.

The fourth concept alters the logic of the above mentioned succession of stable and turbulent stages, adding that besides this specific pattern there are certain founding dilemmas that have a defining role of the civilization itself and thus that keep it together as an open unity. That is, the pattern is repeated across different epochs, in a continuous cycle and, in parallel, specific issues remain central, unique, characterising the civilization within which the different epochs are succeeding themselves.

Taking these four concepts it is possible to draw the following argument. First, Western civilization has had its birth in the Ancient world, both Greek and Roman.

Second, the Greek world brought the world vision; “the ‘world’, in Greek terms”, as is still referred today, implies this broad conception and interpretation of reality, which constitutes a unified whole, even if several versions or visions may co-exist at the same time.

Third, the Romans systematised, operationalised and disseminated a certain Greek vision of the world, creating a legal and institutional structure to support it.

Fourth, a defining characteristic of Western civilization is the dilemma between two possible perspectives, developed in Greek times. One is the conviction that the human being’s environment is intrinsically hostile and that reality is inherently negative, deficient, and that must be put right by constant human efforts and interventions. In this vision human knowledge is the key to success, thus the term ‘gnostics’ and ‘gnosticism’. And reality itself may be divided in bad and good categories, thus the term ‘maniqueism’; the bad, the unknown, the uncontrolled, the unpredictable, i.e. un-intervened reality, and the good, the aspects that may be addressed and dealt with through human intervention. The opposing perspective, present in pre-socratic times and throughout all ages ever since, has a positive view of reality and of its uncontrollable features, thus promoting a constant openness and willingness to absorb unexpected developments and to learn from them.

Fifth, translated in present language and in epistemic terms, though both these views have been present across different ages and the tension between them characterises Western civilization, the first one has tended to be connected to each epoch’s dominant thinking, and it is out of the second perspective that novelty has come to life. Moreover, the first perspective is anthropocentric and reduces reality to a fixed model, predefined and rigid, whilst the second has a vision of the cosmos as a unity and interprets human existence as part of that whole. Once the first perspective became connected to dominant thinking, it was the one highlighted and promoted by the Romans. Therefore the formal, visible, explicit and naturalised perspective of Western civilization is today, and has been since its origins, that of a human constructed model through which reality may be captured and, tentatively, controlled. The fact that the second option became invisible and present in informal terms, implicit and hidden, does not make it a less defining feature of Western civilization. Quite the contrary, it is precisely this less obvious and less naturalised vision the one which is better able to interpret, to respond to and to address the complexity of constantly changing reality.

Sixth, the XXI century globalised world is no longer the home of an imperialist European intervention, as it has been since the Discoveries times to the colonial powers of the XIX and XX centuries. Nevertheless, the European roots of the Western civilisation have become present in a global way, in dialogue or else in open conflict with other prevailing civilisations, mutually influencing one other. Yet, the early tension between two opposed world visions at the root of Western civilisation is still today a crucial interpretation reading map of both present crisis and of past crises. That is, if there is one single, monolithic perspective that reduces reality to its own model of reality, then the only way that this perspective may continue to prevail is through the use of force, by the use of power and the destruction of alternative and threatening perspectives. However, once alternative perspectives do manage to survive and to gradually gain influence, then these will succeed by being open to reality’s changing challenges and continuously absorbing and integrating reality’s intelligibility.

Seventh, these dilemmas, conflicts and creative tensions are recognisable across different levels of society and are particularly relevant within economic, political and scientific spheres of action. The social dimension, the social impact of the crisis, is left out, not because there is no social influence or pressure but because of simplification reasons, in order to highlight that the social consequences are as the tip of the iceberg that hides a much larger picture.

As a wrap-up, key ideas:

(i) the relationship to the unknown is that which radically defines, characterises and determines that which will succeed afterwards. This unknown is not just natural cataclysms, the fear of death or other forms of obvious threats. More importantly, it is the hidden and less evident unknown, in particular the unknown in others, and, worse, in oneself.

(ii) the Ancient world, in particular the Romans, privileged the side of individual human beings related to unity and identity, and ignored and neglected the side related to multiplicity and ambiguity. This happened for purely strategic reasons, that is, no institutional and legal system could survive without a clear set of rules that unambiguously traced and was able to punish its individual members, forcibly, if necessary, imposing its law.

(iii) we have seen that it was the radical fear of the unknown that has triggered the need to predict, and, consequently, to control. All Greek efforts were directed to these objectives. Radical in Latin means to the root, or origin. In the dictionary, “thoroughgoing or extreme, especially as regards change from accepted or traditional forms”.

(iv) yet, the non-mainstream Greek thought started from a different premise, one that maintained that the cosmos is, in itself, intelligible, first, and, second, that the human being’s intelligibility emerges from its being part of that diversified unity, that reality, that cosmos.

(v) anthropocentrism, that places human beings at the centre of the universe, is usually interpreted as having emerged out of the secularisation movement that characterised modern age. Nietzsche, the first pos-modern thinker, and the inheritor of three generations of puritan pastors, declared the death of god. However, in Ancient times, mythical religion and, later, other religions, though being Theo-centric, were understood as if these divinities delegated in the human being their earthly representers.

(vi) the two sides of Greek thinking, the dominant, obsessed with prediction, and the non-dominant, open and inquisitive, interpreted their deities accordingly, the former fascinated by crime and punishment narratives and the later intrigued by the mystery of creation, of existence, of nature, of the cosmos.

(vii) religious thought, spirituality and symbolic reasoning, together with the development and use of language, and the participation in social practices, constituted kernel elements in the early development of the human species. Aristotle’s “rational animal” emerged out of these earlier and millenary experiences.

(viii) the religions of the book, the monotheist movements of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, which developed in geographically proximal areas, being the Mediterranean basin also the origin of several millenary civilisations, including the Western one, share this same dichotomy. That is, there is this constant tension between the need to formalise, define, register, legalise, in contrast with the creative drive to innovate and to challenge preconceived ideas. The religious of the book are therefore the religious of the written law. But, that which is written may have many interpretations and certain factions may interpret written law in a literary form, closing and restricting its meaning, whilst other factions will take the opposite direction, continuously reading and rereading new meanings out of ancient texts. This later form is the one that gives birth to revolutions or to gradual, integrative and subtle change, depending on the resistance that it faces, the greater the oppression, the stronger the reaction.

(xix) Fear of the unknown leads to the need to predict and control. Confidence that the unknown in not necessarily bad, negative and menacing, is more than a black or white issue. That is, the fear of the unknown is related to the vision of the world as being divided in good and bad, the good being that which is clear and proximal, and the bad that which is alien and distanced. However, the attitude of positive confidence in the unknown is quite different. It is

not a denial that good and bad exist as human values but rather that reality is infinitely complex and that this complexity is itself both intelligible and a source of intelligibility. In this complexity, the worst may become the best and the best, the worse. That is, idealised images of goodness may be corrupted by closer inspection and diabolised and tragic images of evilness may be transfigured by the development of other interpretations, other developments of reality itself.

(x) attribution of value is key and this attribution is inherently an affective process. It has value that which leads to positive affects, to feelings of belonging and of wholeness. Affects are a sophisticated version of biological evolution. The formation of crystals or the orbits of the moons form part of this organised reality even if there is no life, no biological processes involved. Affects are this ultimate development of reality's manifestation of its full potential.

(xi) affects lead to values, values lead to openness to complexity, to openness to new interpretations, and to curiosity, creativity and ingenuity. If religious thought is understood as one of the earliest manifestations of rationality and of the early development of the human species, then the question to be asked is the following: is the unknown to be feared or to be trusted? These are the dilemmas that have determined both the crises and their overcoming throughout the development of Western civilization.

(xii) the need to predict and control, and the distrust for the unknown, lead to the creation of rules, models, rigid and formalised knowledge. Reality is itself interpreted through these models, these reading lenses. Those parts of reality which to do not fit the picture may be ignored. And those parts which may question or contradict the fixed model are denied and openly opposed. The confidence in the unknown, the openness to complexity, and the development of the inquiring capacity, may result in a different kind of knowledge, and of a different kind of model of reality. In this version the models are a tool, and they are provisory knowledge, to be used and reinvented as reality imposes its rhythm.

This text is pointing to new directions, is searching for new interpretations of the present European crisis. It has selected three dimensions of this crisis, the economical, the political and the scientific dimensions. It has argued above that this European crisis, or rather that European crises in general, are the result, as the tip of the iceberg, of larger and more complex movements, which themselves reflect the intrinsic dilemmas of Western civilization. These dilemmas are not errors or deficiencies of a well oiled machinery but rather they are an expression of the complexity of reality. This same process may occur within an institution or even within an individual human being. That is, this scalability from civilization to singular individuals indicates that reality manifests itself in a process, a movement, a dynamism that affects its participants, whatever the scale. This reality, or rather, this process through which reality manifests itself, is both internal and external, collective and singular, unified and diversified.

Central to the rationale of the present text is the relationship between theory and practice, and between science and technology. The issue is the following: are these dualities autonomous, linearly and cause-effect related, with a preponderance of theory and science over practice and technology? Or else are they intrinsically and necessarily related, as two sides of the same coin, mutually influencing one another, with a preponderance of practice and technology over theory and science? There is a possible parallelism between the phenomena addressed above, dealing with the tension between two foundational perspectives of the Western world, the urge to predict and control versus the confidence and openness to the unexpected aspects of reality, and the confrontation of these dualities, now referred. The issue is that both science and theory tend to privilege abstract knowledge, intellectual generalisations and rigid models, whilst practice and technology, benefit from the direct contact of material, bodily and temporal reality, the here and now world of daily life and therefore are fostered and nurtured by such direct contact. From this direct contact, from

knowledge learnt from practice, from technology which is itself bringing in new solutions, pointing new directions, posing new questions, true development emerges, new theories and new science, in turn, are revealed or manifested, brought to life.

Lessons learnt: the Western world is captive of an intellectual, abstraction bias; we hear and do not listen, watch and do not see; the urge to predict and control, the obsession for perfect models and the myopic reduction of the subtleties of reality, the ones that are able to show its complexity, have become, once again, mainstream practice and thought. This threat is severe and its consequences are long lasting. Over the course of its history and referring only to its influences from Antiquity, since 500 BC, and not to its roots, which may be traced back to 9000 BC, successive crises have developed out of the conflict between rigid models that had brought success and positive results to past problems, but that have shown catastrophic failure in dealing with new problems. No alignment, no learning, no adaptation, or transformation is possible and the crisis is installed. However, again, this is merely the tip of the iceberg, the answers are already there, already at work, already present, non-intentionally hidden, invisible and becoming gradually more visible, more present, necessary and obvious. Periphery and centre are in conflict and gradually their positions and roles are inverted. Theories, models, abstract knowledge, intellectual elaborations, science, conceptualisations, all forms of human cognitive activity are essential and positive in themselves. The issue is the role they take, the power they absorb and the position they acquire in relation to their antidote, that is, how these theories are themselves recreated and reinvented. More importantly, what does this reveal about how human beings regard themselves, what is their anthropology. Humans understood as being part of reality, affecting and being affected by such reality, being products and producers of both their internal and their external realities, unleashes human's creative power, ingenuity and talent. Questioning and the search for new answers is at the root of scientific thinking, yet science, once established and institutionalised, looses this innovation drive, and so do individuals and so does society.

The economic, politic and scientific dimensions of the crisis that is affecting Europe in the first decades of the twenty first century are profoundly interrelated. This crisis cannot be interpreted as a purely regional and localised issue but rather this interpretation must address the roots of the problem. And it is not enough to relate the economic recession of 2013 to the 2007 and 2008 subprime mortgage crisis in the USA, or to the Eurozone and the public debt risk management issues. These partial analyses are important but redundant and insufficient as both problem and solution tend to go round in circles, one following the other because so-called solutions tend to fail to capture the big picture. The big picture is not a secret formula or a magic trick. The big picture enables reaching a different level of interpretation of reality's phenomena, where the key issue is not the identification of a quick answer to each problem but rather to develop an effective strategy, methodology and technique that may enable a radical epistemic positioning, allowing for transformative action to occur.

Technocracy results from ultra specialised and non-contextualised knowledge to be applied in an exclusive form, eliminating all alternatives or contesting perspectives, using its power to retain ever more power and to dominate larger and larger spheres of society. The expert's or the committee of experts' ruling, isolated from other influences or transdisciplinary insights, immune to outside pressures, has a perverse outcome. It may show extreme advancements and positive results in certain important areas but the lack of the vision of the whole and the fact that the domino effects and chain reactions are systematically ignored, may lead to tragic consequences. The picture is the illustration of how intelligent and well intentioned people may produce non-intelligent results.

The Western world's enchantment with intellectual and abstract models and its illusion that reality, or that which matters in reality, is already taken into account in the model, so that if something does not fit in, it may be ignored, is an easy and quick way to disaster. Yet the disaster itself may continue to be ignored because it does not fit into the model's picture of reality, a picture that has already been naturalised and legitimised as the only obviously possible one, the one supported by the best experts. Double standards occur unintentionally and, somehow, they are successively and recurrently unquestioned and normalised. At this level it is not the role and action of the experts that counts, these are a mere piece in the process, almost the victims of an already in motion mechanism. At this level, what counts is the intellectuals, the well read and well informed, the citizens, the common men and women who nod their heads in approvement, approving the experts action, they did their best, and, in turn, they are the best ever, and approving the political and legal structures that are supporting such action, these are sophisticated and elaborate entities which have taken care of all possible details and sides to the problem. However, once again, both the experts' action and the political institutions' support are only addressing the issues covered by a fixed and rigid model, one that necessarily leaves out critical issues and their chain-reaction effects.

There is change and evolution, new models are developed and new options emerge, yet the pace of change is slow and the accumulated costs are paramount. These are costs of non-effectiveness, sometimes under the flag of ultra efficiency. Costs in human and planetary areas, are the ones more paradigmatic of this disaster story, related to wars, to belic conflicts, to hunger zones, to the proliferation of disease, and to ecologic and environmental problems. The twentieth century is a fine illustration of both the emergence of new models, ideologies and theories, as the most intelligent output of human diligence, shinning in their brilliance, in parallel to the most catastrophic and tragic results, with two world wars, nuclear weapons and disseminated destruction. European in origin, the wars have had long lasting consequences across the globe and still today alliances and disputes are being affected by European related influences. At a less obvious level, there is the critical issue of the scientific and technologic mandate, that is, at the service of whom is human knowledge. The extra planetary explorations of the past century had a strong symbolic impetus, a show of power and of proficiency that has enchanted the world. In the 1960' there was already enough technology and knowhow to solve the problem of hunger across the globe, yet in 1969 men stepped on the moon whilst in 2013 populations still strive with malnutrition and die from it.

Modern science is the child of the Renaissance, the Discoveries and the Enlightenment movements. Scientific evolution has occurred under the banner of the good for humankind. Defending humanism and humanistic ideas has been possible hand-in-hand with the effectivation of huge atrocities. Urgency is the word needed, it has never been so urgent.
Answers may come from the following reasoning: since the cave ages and pre-historic times that humankind has evolved from perfectioning and systematising already effective answers to immediate problems, as well as exploring new answers to new problems, that is, to open problems. This evolution is not a problem focused process, it is not problem-solving. Rather, solutions emerge out of a broader process and the problem-solving activity is itself the product of a larger and more sophisticated evolution, the so called open-problem searching, exploring, questioning and inquiring. This was true for prehistoric human beings and is still true today. Focusing the problem alone is part of the problem and not part of the solution. Focusing the problem closes the picture because the problem itself has to be put in perspective, contextualised and revised. Problems are needed to highlight and to point-out fragile areas but their importance is more related to what they hide than with what they show up front. As the symptom of a disease, it is needed to reveal something more serious and severe. This implies that questions are more important than answers because questions open up new directions and new possibilities that were unimaginable beforehand.

Human evolution is slow and present society's problems are hard to tackle not because of lack of expertise, of knowhow or of proficiency. Educational, industrial, market, political and legal institutions in the Western world are well equipped, staffed, trained and organised. Both theoretical knowledge and organizational, operational, bureaucratic and procedural knowledge are well developed. It is the garden of paradise, the vision of a well developed society when seen from a distance.

Two questions are critical, which focus on two different aspects of reality. The first one is the question whether the present organisation of resources is doing its best in terms of its own potential. This is an efficiency issue. Somehow, the extreme perfectioning of efficiency procedures, systematised and organised within partial and autonomous areas, leads to a far from efficient result when compared to the legitimately formed expectations related to its final outcomes. Similarly to the humanism discourse, efficiency in the parts of the whole does not necessarily lead to the efficiency of the whole because the whole that is being considered is a moving target, a wetland, a quicksand, that is, it is a necessarily undefined and ignored reality. The proclamation of a systems view, holistic and complex, quickly thins down to a fixed and closed input-output model. This is desirable for fast results in terms of local, repetitive, simple, stable and perfectly identified contexts, not for long term results in relation to phenomena that are global, changing, complex, turbulent and belong to hard to identify contexts. However, the dramatic issue is that it is a very small step to take this rigid and closed approach, this linear input-output model, to deal with ongoing, generalised and complex issues, issues that are continuously affecting humankind as a whole, with dramatic and long lasting consequences.

This first question is critical because if there is no perception that there is already, and unavoidably, a severe efficiency problem within the present state of affairs, that is, the Western world, the developed world, and how its affairs affect the rest of world, then no possible argument may be developed to come out of this bottle-neck, it is a dead end. The next step, the next question is related to effectiveness and it is radically more important that the first one, being the first one a necessary condition of possibility for addressing the second one. In other words, effectiveness, the achievement of predefined, well intentioned and desirable results, once taken for granted imply that only efficiency issues remain. However, the next step is to reconsider these goals, these predefined objectives that are so easily dismissed and put to the side. Here, again, it is historicity that gives the answer. Historically, humankind has achieved unimaginable results in the most hostile conditions, across all ages, all geographical regions, all cultures and all ethnic origins. In high competition sports personal records are beaten; in arts, science, education, industry or health, amazing achievements happen; in daily life, anonymous heroes achieve amazing results, for their own benefit, for the benefit of those they love, or even for people they do not even know. The harsher the times and circumstances, the more surprising these results may seem. In contrast, there is blindness, indifference, un-sensitivity to the suffering of others, often sustained by the most humanist and well intentioned discourse.

Proposed method: big ideas, small steps. We cannot be small, short, in ideas, first, and, second (*não ao "muito carro e pouca pista"*), our steps have to fit in with the size of our legs (*não ao "passo maior do que a perna"*).

- To define moving-targets, such as the concept of development – at individual, organizational and societal levels
- To define society and to consider development in globalised terms, where no geographical area is excluded
- To notice that this moving target is beneficial at individual level, because it is highly gratifying, contaminating and motivating, and for the communities where it belongs, including for-profit organizations because consumers understand, recognize and

reward the genuine efforts undertaken by enterprises for the benefit of humankind, of the planet, or of animals' quality of life

- To maintain that this target is being continuously searched for, here and now, in every singular situation, in terms of the achievement of the best possible results under the circumstances, that is, the full potential is being achieved and thus, simultaneously, it is being expanded, as it is, itself, a moving target. In economics terms, the Production Possibilities Frontier (Fronteira de Possibilidades de Produção FPP), illustrates this idea; also, the idea of shadow-prices (preços-sombra) (because, in operational research (investigação operacional), it signifies the units gained in the optimized function through the release of one unit of the restriction being considered)
- To focus on practices, on what people actually do, including ourselves
- To accept frailties, weak areas, not as a menace or as a fatality but as something to be done something about, that calls for some action, similarly to the SWOT analysis rationale. Ambiguity, conflict, paradox, going back and forward, the feeling of being lost, frustrated and despaired, are natural parts of complex processes. Authenticity, trust, confidence and enthusiasm are the needed antidotes
- To define models, theories, concepts out of open ideas, ideas strong enough to keep the searching open, in a double movement, on one hand assuming, defining, determining and closing down, considering this provisory knowledge, and, on the other hand, to be open to knowledge embedded and embodied in language use and in social practices
- To revise three main areas, in terms knowledge that is already being taken for granted, already assumed as being unquestionable: economics science, political science and science itself, science in general. For instance, to consider the reasons that have justified the need for the creation of certain new disciplinary areas in the twentieth century, such as environmental engineering, economics of happiness or philosophy of science. To think why Harvard's greatest success course was in positive thinking. To explain why computing science is one of the only sciences that incorporates philosophical theories and concepts, including the binary language, 0-1.
- To focus on practices, practices, practices, wherever they may be found. Religion and not spirituality because spirituality is like sexuality, it affects all aspects of individual life whilst regarding religion, or atheism, or agnosticism, it is possible to identify their expected or self-proclaimed practices. At school, sexual education may be taught by one individual teacher yet it is much more effective and interesting if every subject matter may address sexual education, from literature and biology, to arts and history. Practices are illuminating because, as the concept of best practices show, they may be adapted and adopted to newer contexts. However, often there are ambiguous areas such as evidence based medicine, where the end result is blind protocols that are easily manipulated for less desirable interests, such as cost-cutting-at-all-costs.
- Development at individual, organizational and societal levels implies two interrelated concepts, as two sides of the same coin: innovation and competitiveness. In similar ways as has happened to evidence-based medicine, innovation and competitiveness have been used as a banner for cost-cutting-at-all-costs within the public and the private sectors, affecting individuals, organizations and societies. Innovation implies the creation of some novelty that may be brought to the market, that is, that has a commercial value. Competitiveness signifies that something has been achieved that is at least as good or even better than what is offered by its competitors.
- Innovation and competition, though they are concepts that seem easily understood and defined, hide infinite layers of meaning, that is, they have a complex and thus rich nature. They are circular concepts, which may only be considered in relation to other concepts. An innovation needs something against which to be contrasted with and classified as being innovative. Competition may only be defined in relative terms, I am competitive if I am successful and I am successful, in this market, with this product, with these competitors, if I am competitive. This means that no one may

know what innovation and competitiveness really mean, and this makes this concepts very interesting and challenging. They need a narrative, an argument, a line of thought or an open idea to support them. They need a commercial concept, commercial in a wide sense, considering even not-for-profit markets and organizations.

- Development, and consequently, innovation and competitiveness, are symbolic concepts, subjective entities which need to be wrapped up in a story to become effective. Stories need protagonists and contexts, and the practices that occur show behavior, attitudes, values, beliefs, emotions and affects. Economics is a behavioral science. And so is political science and, probably, science in general, as a whole. Practices matter because it is through practices, through actual action that ideas come to life and also that new ideas, new abstractions, theories, models may be imagined, created or invented. Practices themselves tell stories and show more that they wish to hide. Decision-making is limited and deceptive. Stated intentions usually fall short of reality. But practices are there to keep us all awake, attentive, aware of new possibilities that may emerge from the next corner, from the next step.
- To train individuals in a combined approach that interrelates the three main areas considered: economics and political sciences, and science in general. To require the following task: to put in place a project as a business start-up, but a born-global.
- To use two knowledge areas that are little understood and recognized, yet they are at the kernel level of Western's civilization: semiotics and psychoanalysis. These areas are both theories, better, practical philosophies and also they are effective practices, to be applied individually and to reality as a whole.
- The picture is not complete yet. Historicity is at the top of the pyramid and technology runs all the way down to the bottom, where the arts are, as the most illuminating aspects of human achievement.
- Suggestion: to create a MBA with two options, initial and advanced. Both would cover the over mentioned areas, only with different degrees of investment.
- France and Brasil are two countries strong in practical philosophy, in semiotics and in psychoanalysis. They are following the world, which is following the anglo-saxon world-vision, but, they add they local flavor. And this makes them unique. And this makes them the best possible allies for a project such as this one.
- Context analysis: knowledge economy; neo-classical assumptions are being questioned; knowledge is a key asset, resource and factor of production but it does not shown the law of diminishing returns; information is not only not scarce but it is in excess, there is an information overload. The experience of the excess is a key feature highlighted by ontologic phenomenology. Abundance as a new era, is what the new-age religious sects proclaim. Religion is affecting the geo-political balance but religion and the religious issues are a private matter in the secularized and developed societies. Economics and politics leave out religion. Management as a social science is an applied area of economics which, in its practice, has indirect relations with the political world in the sense that no development is possible at public or private levels without some sort of alliance between the two areas. The knowledge economy shows, reveals, expresses the power of collaboration and of cooperation across all levels of society. Trust is the new currency of the knowledge economy. Facing information overload leads to the need to interpret and to make usefull such information. There is a shortage of such professionals and experts who may only come from areas where a transdisciplinary training is offered. In Europe, the Bologna process has tried to solve a serious problem: the severe lack of cooperation and alignment at institutional level, across member states, between and within them, and between teaching and research, and higher education institutions and industry. European training and historical culture has produced some of the best professionals and scientists in the world. However, European societies have not been able to offer, in the past decades, a challenging and rewarding environment

able to welcome, retain and host such individuals. Part of the problem is related to the lack of integration of the knowledge that already is available and is, nevertheless ignored. As knowledge management area proclaims, the hardest problem is not the need for new knowledge but the ability to use already available knowledge. Twentieth century European thinkers have produced sophisticated theories and concepts that still lie unrecognized and unexplored and that is a tragic discovery. Mass education and the proliferation of advanced studies has had the perverse effect of making vulgar interpretations of sophisticated knowledge, or of applying reductive approaches to deal with complex knowledge.

- The present training-proposal-project highlights three areas of intervention: international trade, as the strongest factor behind and as the fast track for world development, and also because it is in international trade that the Western world has shown, and is showing, both its best and also its worst, and finally because higher education institutions, who also actively participate in international trade, are a key element in disseminating high levels and standards of education worldwide; belic conflicts, and the areas related to conflict prevention and to peace building, as key areas where both political and economic knowledge is key; urbanism, or urban reality, as, since 2012, half of the world's population is living in cities, and, since antiquity, cities and citizenship has had a paradigmatic effect in civilizations because cites are, per excellence, human creations, they are the ultimate example of human creativity and expertise, that express how humans understand themselves and the values under which they design their lives, in particular in terms of the quality of these lives.
- Feminism is critical in this proposal because it is based on the feminine archetype of nurturing and caring and not on the masculine one of attacking and competing. The idea is not to reach final and definite answers but rather to advance gradually and to openly accept the limitations and frailties of such advancements, inviting and integrating the efforts of others. This implies exploring issues such as the role of women in society, women's relation to the younger and the older generations, the relation of women to power and to hierarchical functions, women entrepreneurs, women scientists, women artists, or women politicians.
- Demography and demographic evolution is a critical dimension to be analyzed in relation to all above mentioned efforts because it is closely related to historicity, thus enabling a rich understanding of past and present realities and of future possibilities.
- Again, needed knowledge is already there, as management theories are prolific in identifying the need to balance objective and subjective perspectives and information. The concept of sustainability, and of its three pillars, environmental, economic and social is a critical example. Other examples illustrate key strategic thinking, such as the models related to TQM, BPM, BPG, or BPY. Broad areas such as economics of information and information management, knowledge economics and knowledge management, or ultra specialized areas such as mobil computing, serious games, ubiquous computing or reality computing
- This training-proposal-project transcontinental partnership, links: practice, education and research.
- The present part of the project is the easy part, the very, very easy part. It is easy to share enthusiastic ideas and ambitious projects. However, to actually take the risk of considering challenging pilot-projects his a paramount effort that has infinite good ideas to, well intentionally, be postponed.
- This project is presently the focus of work of one single person but is the outcome of wide and varied groups of people and of scientific communities. Formal academic presentations have been presented, which have been informally approved, and classified as of being of high interest. A concrete e-learning project has been drafted as an MBA post-graduate course, to function through a convention between three different higher education institutions. Multinational consultancies have been

addressed with the same positive initial results. And private consultants are surpassing universities and traditional research centers in their capacity to create new knowledge, relevant to the business world and to society as a whole. Nevertheless, these efforts are slow to materialize in an effective pilot-project so that the present effort opens again the possibility of drafting, once more, a formal proposal, from these loose notes and free conversation style.

- *"Já foram ditas todas as palavras necessárias para salvar o mundo. Falta salvá-lo." Almada Negreiros*